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Koryŏ Buddhist Paintings and the Cult of Amitābha: Visions of a Hwaŏm-Inspired Pure Land

Richard D. McBride II

Abstract

Many paintings of Amitābha were commissioned for devotional use by elites in numerous votive shrines and temples, and others probably played a role in the abundant Buddhist festivals and ceremonies of the Koryŏ period. Images of Amitābha and Amitābha triads functioned in a variety of devotional settings and the inscriptions on some icons suggest their use to enable all living beings in the dharma realm to be reborn in the Pure Land. Some images might have been used in deathbed rituals enabling believers to visualize Amitābha coming to escort them into the Pure Land. Inscriptional and visual evidence strongly suggests a Hwaŏm context for many paintings of Amitābha. Although aspirants sought rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land, the Hwaŏm doctrine of the interpenetration of all things in the dharma realm inferred the ultimate non-duality between Sukhāvātī and the Lotus Storehouse Realm. The cult of Amitābha in Koryŏ was closely associated with Hwaŏm Buddhism, particularly the "Practices" chapter at the end of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* in forty rolls. The genre of Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas are linked to this version of the *Avatamsaka* through verses and dhāraṇīs appended to manuscripts of the text and associated commentaries. The concept of the dharma realm that interpenetrates all things provides context for unique images, such as the *Transformation Tableau of the Hwaŏm Pure Land*, which both visually and symbolically interfuse the aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha with the Hwaŏm path of bodhisattva practice. Other transformation tableaux of the sixteen visualizations of the *Visualization Sūtra* demonstrate knowledge of varied doctrinal positions that circulated in China on the types of people who are reborn in the nine classes of rebirth in the Pure Land. Such transformation tableaux functioned in the context of education and edification, along with devotion, encouraging lay people to become bodhisattvas or reminding them that they can be reborn in the Pure Land.

Keywords: Koryŏ Buddhist paintings, Pure Land Buddhism, Amitābha cult, Hwaŏm Buddhism, votive temples

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The cult of Amitābha, characteristically centered on the worship of this Buddha through mental recollection and verbal recitation of his name (*yōmbul* 念佛; Skt. *buddhānusmṛti*) and the aspiration for rebirth in Sukhāvātī, his Pure Land of Extreme Bliss in the West (*sōbang kūngnak* 西方極樂), was one of the most popular and widespread Buddhist practices in Korea during the Koryŏ 高麗 period (918–1392). Although much research on the Buddhism of the Koryŏ period has focused on the influence of the Hwaŏm 華嚴 (Ch. Huayan) and Chaŭn 慈恩 (Yogācāra; Ch. Cien) traditions, and later the Ch'ŏnt'ae 天台 (Ch. Tiantai) tradition, in the capital and at court and the dominance of the Sŏn 禪 traditions in the provinces (Pulgyo munhwa yŏn'guwŏn 1982, 179–265; Pulgyo munhwa yŏn'guwŏn 1984, 89–244; Heo 1986, 180–287), few scholars would dispute the favored position enjoyed by the worship of Amitābha among the Koryŏ royalty and nobility, especially during the late Koryŏ period when Koryŏ functioned as an integral part of the Mongol Yuan 元 empire (1279–1368) in Northeast Asia. The primary evidence for the privileged place of the Amitābha cult in the Koryŏ hierarchy is that, of the roughly one hundred and sixty paintings presently identified as Koryŏ Buddhist paintings (*Koryŏ Puhwa* 高麗佛畫), at least a third of the paintings depict what art historians refer to as “Pure Land themes.”¹ In conventional scholarship on East Asian Buddhist art, works of “Pure Land themes” include not only illustrations of Amitābha, Amitābha triads and other groupings of the Buddha with sets of bodhisattvas or other followers, and narrative portrayals or “transformation tableaux”² of the *Sūtra on the Visualization of the Buddha Amitāyus* (*Guan Wuliangshou jing bianxiang* 觀無量壽經變相; hereafter the sūtra will be called the *Visualization Sūtra*), but also portraits of the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, including the large number of paintings of the Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara (*suwŏl Kwanŭm to* 水月觀音圖), and Kṣitigarbha. Here, however, I will confine myself to depictions of Amitābha and his Pure Land. This essay will address two related questions while providing a survey of extant scholarship: Where were images of Amitābha placed and how were they used? Some narrative portrayals or transformation tableaux depicting the sixteen visualizations of the *Visualization Sūtra* may have been used for teaching and edification, and some paintings of Amitābha and Amitābha triads might have been used in deathbed rituals, but most extant images were probably placed

in votive temples. Although some scholars have argued that some Koryŏ Buddhist paintings of Amitābha function in a meditative context,³ my position is that Koryŏ Buddhist paintings of Amitābha and his Pure Land functioned primarily as expressions of religious piety and aids to a wide range of devotional practice, including aids to the conceptualization of seminal doctrines of the Hwaŏm tradition.

In other words, images of Amitābha and his Pure Land must be understood within the all-inclusive context of Hwaŏm Buddhism, which synthesized doctrinal beliefs and devotional and cultic practices in Korean Buddhism (McBride 2008, 86–138). In this paper I will first reconstruct the religious context for paintings of Amitābha in the late Koryŏ period. I will then analyze the functions of solitary images of Amitābha and Amitābha triads, discussing problems associated with classification and the conflation of Amitābha and Hwaŏm themes. Third, I will explore the category of “Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas.” Finally, I will examine transformation tableaux of the *Visualization Sūtra* and the Hwaŏm Pure Land.

The Context for Koryŏ Buddhist Paintings

Although only about one hundred and sixty Koryŏ paintings remain, painters, both lay and monastic, probably made thousands of paintings with Buddhist themes that were housed for decoration and worship in many types of structures Buddhist and otherwise—monastic complexes (*sawŏn* 寺院; *sach'al* 寺刹), palace buildings (*chŏn'gak* 殿閣), multistoried pagoda towers (*ch'ŭngt'ap* 層塔), votive shrines and temples (*wŏndang* 願堂, *wŏnch'al* 願刹), dharma halls (*pŏptang* 法堂), and the royal temple complex (*naebuldang* 內佛堂)—as either the principal image of the Buddha (*ponjon* 本尊)⁴ or as paintings hung behind Buddhist statues (*hubul* 後佛, *hubul t'aenghwa* 後佛幀畫) (Kim Jung Hee 2003a, 107–113). Moon Myung Dae outlined three basic functions for extant Koryŏ Buddhist paintings: worship (*yebaeyong* 禮拜用), ornamentation or decoration (*changŏmyong* 莊嚴用), and teaching or edification (*kyohwayong* 教化用) (1981, 25–28). The large number of paintings of Amitābha suggests that some were also probably used in dharma assemblies (*pŏphoeyong* 法會用)

and, as we shall see below, other images of Amitābha were commissioned to pray for the longevity of the king (*yŏnmyŏng kiwŏnyong* 延命祈願用), and perhaps to offer congratulations for royal birth (*ch'ukt'anyong* 祝誕用). Other paintings were probably used in rituals for exorcizing invading soldiers (*yangbyŏng* 禳兵) and expelling calamities (*sojae* 消災), but there were other functions as well (Kim Jung Hee 2003a, 113–125).

Votive shrines and temples appear to be the most obvious and appropriate site for the enshrinement of various kinds of images of Amitābha. A great number of votive temples were built for kings and queens, as well as lords and nobles, during the Koryŏ period. In his *Illustrated Account of Koryŏ* (*Gaoli tujing* 高麗圖經), the Chinese envoy Xu Jing 徐兢 (1091–1153) states that there were at least twenty-six votive temples in the vicinity of the Koryŏ capital in the early twelfth century, but by the late Koryŏ period the *Song shi* 宋史 (History of the Song Dynasty) reports that there were more than three hundred (Han 1998, 221, 256, 295). Besides various kinds of death-day celebrations, commemorative rituals, and abstinence ceremonies (*kijae* 忌齋, *kiilchae* 忌日齋) that included prayers for the merit of the deceased in the netherworld, abstinence from particular foods, entertainments, and behaviors for specific periods of time, and the burning of incense (referred to variously as *kisin myŏngbok* 忌辰冥福, *ch'ubok ūisik* 追福儀式, *kiil ch'ubok* 忌日追福, *kisin haenghyang* 忌辰行香), votive temples were the locus of ample Buddhist services that would call for the use of images of Amitābha. These included the unobstructed great convocation (*much'a taehoe* 無遮大會), which functioned as a vegetarian feast for the assembly of monks and laity and a kind of open discussion on the dharma and festival; the rite for the deliverance of creatures of water and land (*suryukhoe* 水陸會), a ritual of multiple stages by which animals are made Buddhists by vicariously taking the three refuges, they are then made bodhisattvas, and finally they are caused to be reborn in the Pure Land by the power of dhāraṇī; the Amitābha assembly (*Mit'ahoe* 彌陀會), in which aspirants supplicated for rebirth in the Pure Land for themselves and their ancestors; and the *Ullambana* abstinence or ghost festival (*Uranbunjae* 盂蘭盆齋), a ritual fast that concludes with a feast for the monks, which promised to free one's ancestors from unwholesome rebirths and effect their rebirth in Sukhāvātī (Han 1998, 311–312).

Furthermore, although no examples of transformation tableaux (*pyŏnsang*, Ch. *bianxiang* 變相) used specifically for preaching and instructional purposes, like those found in the Dunhuang 敦煌 cave complex (Mair 1986; Wu 1992), have been discovered in Koryŏ, refined examples of transformation tableaux are found in illustrated manuscripts of Buddhist sūtras (*sagyŏng* 寫經) probably commissioned by the royal family, nobility, and other elites during the Koryŏ period (Pak Young-sook 1987–88; 2003).

The original context of a select number Koryŏ Buddhist paintings as well as information about donors and patrons is known because of the existence of inscriptions (*hwagi* 畫記). In a few cases, the inscriptions suggest how the image was used, or at least provide the officially-stated reason for the commissioning of an image (Kim Jung Hee 2001; 2012). Although information from inscriptions will figure prominently in my analysis of the provenance and function of paintings associated with the cult of Amitābha, most paintings are anonymous and lack direct information about their production and original purpose.

Another historical reality that has shaped the scholarship on Koryŏ Buddhist paintings is that because most are preserved in Japan—although some were certainly carried away as booty by pirates or by soldiers in later wars, other images were probably produced directly for political use in diplomatic relations with the various polities on the archipelago—their understanding and use was transformed by their “afterlife” in the Japanese islands (Lippit 2008, 194–203). Moreover, because the nature and history of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism are fundamentally different from the way adoration of Amitābha was approached traditionally in Korea and China, and because Japanese art historians laid out the conceptual framework and scholarly jargon used to analyze such paintings, the conventional interpretations of Koryŏ Buddhist paintings in general, and paintings of Amitābha in particular, have been unavoidably influenced by Japanese scholarship (Lippit 2008, 203–221). Just as important as the modern scholarly understanding of the subject is the way that Buddhists of the Koryŏ period understood Pure Land practice and devotion.

The widespread popularity and simplicity of Amitābha worship made it a cultic practice that could not be ignored by scholar monks of all traditions. For example, the Sŏn Master Pojo Chinul 普照知訥 (1158–1210), whose

approaches to Sŏn practice and the amalgamation of Sŏn and Hwaŏm greatly influenced the development of Korea's indigenous Buddhist tradition, presents a self-reflective Sŏn interpretation of the practice of recollecting the name of the Buddha Amitābha that focuses on curbing and controlling one's body, speech, and mind while one "single-mindedly and fervently recollect[s] Praise to Amitābha Buddha" (Buswell 1983, 193–194). Similarly, the Sŏn Master T'aego Pou 太古普愚 (1301–1382), who went to Yuan China in 1346 and received transmission in the Linji school 臨濟宗 (Kor. Imjejong) of Chan (Sŏn) Buddhism and served as state preceptor (*kuksa* 國師) twice in 1356 and 1371, encouraged his disciples to realize that the dharma-body⁵ of Amitābha was everywhere in mind-ground or mental condition (*simji*, Ch. *xindi* 心地) of living beings. He encourages his disciples to use the devotional practice of verbal recollection of the name of Amitābha in a self-reflexive manner. In other words, they should do it as a means of examining their own inherent nature, their own latent Buddha-nature, until they realize that their own minds are Buddha (T'aego 1979, 679c–680a; Cleary 1998, 109–110).

The Sŏn monk Hyegŭn 慧勤 (Naong 懶翁, 1320–1376), who went to Yuan China in 1347 to study the dharma and returned to Koryŏ in 1358 and became a royal preceptor (*wangsa* 王師) under King Kongmin 恭愍 (r. 1351–1374) in 1371, was not only familiar with the cult of Amitābha, but in a poem presented to the scholar-official Yi Sang 李商, he advocated the practice of mental recollection of Amitābha (*yŏmbul*):

Repeatedly fixing monastic complexes, you make contact directly with the future.

The Sŏn of the South and the North depart harmoniously and come back again!

In addition, if you face the West and your mind diligently recollects the Buddha,

The highest grade of a lotus flower will spontaneously open. (Hyegŭn 1979, 742b21–23)

Thus, Hyegŭn seamlessly assimilated traditional merit-making practices, such as fixing and refurbishing monasteries, with Sŏn meditation, as well as advo-

cated that aspirants recollect or chant the name of Amitābha while facing the west.

In a long panegyric lauding Śākyamuni, the late Koryō monk Mugi 無奇 (Unmuk 雲默, d.u.), who was a scholar of the Ch'ōnt'ae tradition and was closely affiliated with monks of the White Lotus Society (Paengnyōnsa 白蓮社) in Koryō, gives poignant voice to the widespread belief at the time that veneration of the Buddha Amitābha was the most sure response to life in an age when the Buddhist teaching was in decline.

Nevertheless, what else should we do but seek the Pure Land in this age of the decline of the dharma (*malbōp* 末法)? Those people who have many doubts about and slander this approach to the dharma, if they laugh at and obstruct those who see and seek rebirth [in the Pure Land], they will mislead themselves and other people and bear a grudge with the Buddha. What a pity! What a pity! (Mugi 1979, 531b10–14)

To Mugi, seeking the Pure Land was the only viable Buddhist practice for the current degenerate age in which he lived. Later in the same text Mugi advocates that aspirants focus their worship on a single buddha to attain “resonance” (*kamŭng* 感應), which here, due to the context, seems to mean some kind of powerful spiritual experience with the Buddha Amitābha:

Speaking of recollecting buddhas and bodhisattvas, all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions and three realms are immeasurable in numbers, and their names are also the same. If one [tries] to recollect all of them, the ultimate end is liberal, the mind is scattered, and samādhi is difficult to achieve, responding in accordance to the conditions. If one concentrates his mind and worshipfully recollects one buddha and one bodhisattva, then resonance will be achieved easily. [That person] will precisely see the true body, hear the dharma, and awaken to the Way to enlightenment. [That person] will see all the immeasurable buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions gather together and surround him. If it is in the present world system, he will not obtain a personal vision. If it is in the subsequent world system, he will certainly be reborn in that place

according to his intentions, and he will personally receive offerings. Hence, the *Treatise on the Pure Land* (*Jingtu lun* 淨土論) says, “The meritorious virtues of one buddha and the meritorious virtues of all the buddhas are not different! Because they regard the nature of dharmas to be the same, for this reason, when one recollects one buddha it is the same as recollecting all the buddhas.” (And so on and so forth). (Mugi 1979, 524b10–19)

Not only did Mugi promote the practice of recollecting the Buddha Amitābha in his writings, but he is remembered as making it a regular part of his actual practice. The colophon attached to the end of his *Eulogy on the Achievements of the Tathāgata Śākyamuni* reports: “He eventually arrived at T’agil Hermitage 卓一庵 on Mt. Sihŭng 始興山. Thereafter he made chanting the *Lotus Sūtra*, recollecting Amitābha, painting [images] of buddhas, and copying sūtras his daily practice for nearly twenty years” (Mugi 1979, 539c21–23). The paintings of Amitābha made by Mugi were not the exquisite paintings that have been preserved in monasteries and museums. They were probably simple images using black ink on paper that were distributed to the laity and which could be hung in people’s houses for daily devotions.

In a preface presented to an otherwise unknown religious man named Hyu 休, the Confucian scholar Yi Saek 李穡 (1328–1396) provides a glimpse of how the production of Buddhist images was a seminal and commonplace Buddhist practice during the late Koryŏ period.

Furthermore, speaking of images of the buddha and the words of the buddha, both are so-called bases that are particularly necessary for entering the Way to enlightenment. I had the disciples Tou 道于 and Tarwŏn 達元 transform paper and black ink into annotated manuscripts of the *Flower Garland* [*Avataṃsaka*] and *Lotus Sūtras*. Furthermore, I explained the dharma that is obtained through patronage, and I completed [a painting of] Amitābha and the eight bodhisattvas of the Western Region and I enshrined it in the Lamp of Lasting Clarity (Changmyŏngdŭng 長明燈). He originally approved the remainder [of the money] as a bestowal to assist in the publication of sutras. (Sŏ Kŏjŏng 1968–1969, 7.651 [roll 87])

This passage provides evidence that many types of images would have been accessible and available for consumption by the monastic community and laity. More important is the statement that “the dharma is obtained through patronage.” Furthermore, it hints at an informal connection between the veneration of Amitābha and the Hwaŏm and Ch’ŏnt’ae traditions that will be developed below: Images of the buddha and words of the buddha both have a place in leading people to the Way to enlightenment, and the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* is connected to paintings of Amitābha. Also, the image of Amitābha and the eight great bodhisattvas was enshrined in something like a small altar lamp or stone lamp. The image, therefore, might not have functioned as decoration; rather, it may have served as a means to empower or protect the lamp.

Pure Land and Hwaŏm Themes in Images of Amitābha and Amitābha Triads

Amitābha is conventionally depicted in Koryŏ Buddhist paintings adorned in a red Buddhist robe (*kaṣāya*; Kor. *kasa* 袈裟) ornamented with large golden medallions and dark green robes covering his lower body, as in the *Amitābha* dated 1306. Sometimes Amitābha is portrayed standing on two lotus flowers facing straight-forward with his right arm stretched downward and depicting a mudrā and his left hand held in front of his chest depicting a mudrā, such as the *Shimazu Amitābha* dated 1286. He is also shown seated in lotus fashion on a lotus throne face forward with the right hand held up in a mudrā and the left hand, also depicting a mudrā, held horizontally at his naval, as in the *Amitābha* in the collection of the Gyokurin-in 玉林院 in Kyoto. He is also sometimes depicted in this manner flanked by two bodhisattvas, typically Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, or Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, as in the *Amitābha Triad* at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, dated to the fourteenth century. These paintings, conventionally classified as “revered images” (*chonsangdo* 尊像圖) (Moon 1981a, 237–243), were probably hung for devotion and contemplation in personal monasteries built by the Koryŏ royalty and nobility and in votive temples because of the sumptuous materials used in their creation (Chung 2013, 60–62).

A solitary frontal image of Amitābha seated on a lotus throne, with an inscription dating to 1306 (fig. 1), suggests a votive or precatory context for its creation. The image was commissioned by a certain Kwōn Poksu 權福壽, about whom several theories have been advanced (Ide 1996, 19–21; Kim Jung Hee 2004). Kwōn was probably a confidant of the Koryō royal house because the inscription reports that the painting of Amitābha was commissioned to supplicate for the Yuan emperor to live a long time (*mansu mugang* 萬壽無疆) and that King Ch'ungnyōl 忠烈 (r. 1274–1308), King Ch'ungsōn 忠宣 (r. 1308–1313), and the latter's queen (Princess Pot'apporin 寶塔實憐公主; or Great Imperial Princess Kyeguk 薊國大長公主, d. 1315) might return speedily from the Yuan capital of Dadu 大都 (Beijing) to Koryō. The donor then vows that he and the living beings in the dharma realm (*pōpkye saengsaeng* 法界生生) might speedily be reborn in the [land of] peace and nurturance (*ch'osaeng anyang* 超生安養), which is another name for Sukhāvātī, and reports that he has made this vow together with the Buddhist monk (*toin* 道人) Kyemun 戒文 and the layman Pak Hyojin 朴孝眞 (Moon 1981a, 237–238; Kim Jung Hee 2004, 50; 2012, 256–257). Although King Ch'ungsōn did return to Koryō the following year, 1307, his father King Ch'ungnyōl passed away in Dadu in 1308.

Further investigation shows that the inscription on the painting is closely connected to the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* and Hwaōm (Ch. Huayan) Buddhism. The *Avatamsaka-sūtra* provides a compelling vision of reality as the complete and unhindered interpenetration of all phenomena, and describes the Buddha Vairocana, who both universally embodies and presides over the dharma realm as a cosmic or celestial being possessing numerous corporeal marks. Because Vairocana is the source of all things in the universe and because all other buddhas are emanations of Vairocana, other buddhas, such as Amitābha, may be imagined as possessing the same marks. According to Ide Seinosuke, although the *sūtra* mentions no less than ninety-seven marks, they are not practical for iconographic representation. Nevertheless, two of these have become distinctive symbolic features of Koryō Buddhist iconography: the svastika (*manja* 卍字) found on the Buddha's chest and the vajracakras, or “adamantine wheels” (*kūmgangnyun* 金剛輪), on the Buddha's palms (T 279, 10.349c2–7; Ide 2003, 35). Hence, the iconographic presentation of Amitābha in Koryō Buddhist painting portrays a subtle Hwaōm interpretation.



Figure 1. *Amitābha*, Koryŏ, 1306. Hanging scroll; color on silk. 162.0 x 91.7 cm. Nezu Institute of Fine Arts, Tokyo. Following Yi and Yi (1981, pl. 10).

Furthermore, the choice of the expression “dharma realm” in the inscription confirms the importance of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* and the relevance of Hwaōm thought in the Buddhist world of Koryō. In the Hwaōm intellectual tradition, the dharma realm (*pōpkye*, Ch. *fajie* 法界; Skt. *dharmadhātu*) means the universe of all things in existence and is said to be the essence of the one mind (*ilsim*, Ch. *yixin* 一心) (T 278, 9.397b23, 410b25). In the Chinese Huayan 華嚴 intellectual tradition, which the royal Koryō monk Ŭich’ōn 義天 (1055–1101) lectured on regularly in Koryō during his lifetime (Ŭich’ōn 1979, 566b11–20; McBride 2012, 489–492), this dharma realm is explained as being divided into four: the dharma realm of phenomena (*sa pōpkye*, Ch. *shi fajie* 事法界), the dharma realm of principle (*i pōpkye*, Ch. *li fajie* 理法界), the dharma realm of the unimpeded nature of principle and phenomena (*isa muae pōpkye*, Ch. *lishi wuai fajie* 理事無礙法界), and the dharma realm of the unimpeded nature of phenomena and phenomena (*sasa muae pōpkye*, Ch. *shishi wuai fajie* 事事無礙法界). These four dharma realms comprise the theory on the conditioned arising of the dharma realm (T 1735, 35.730a2–11). The view of the unimpeded interpenetration of all things seems to be reflected in the background of many Koryō paintings of Amitābha, such as the *Amitābha* dated 1306, which place the sought-for Buddha, and hence the viewer, already in the Pure Land, which is in a relationship of unimpeded interconnection with the realm of living beings in the dharma realm.

Other Koryō paintings of Amitābha display distinctive characteristics that suggest connections with Hwaōm thought. For example, one of the earliest extant paintings of Amitābha, dated 1286, and formerly in the collection of the Shimazu daimyō family in Satsuma Province on the island of Kyushu, is comparatively large and shows Amitābha standing on the leaves of two lotus flowers in a three-quarters stance with his feet pointed to the right but his head facing the left (from the perspective of the viewer) with his right arm stretched downward and left hand held up forming a mudrā. Amitābha’s right hand seems to beckon the viewer to a lotus pedestal located in the pond beneath the downward stretching fingers (fig. 2). This depiction of Amitābha is rare because he is portrayed alone, because his arms are in an uncommon pose, and because he has a svastika on his chest.



Figure 2. *Shimazu Amitābha*. Koryō, 1286. Hanging scroll, color on silk. 203.5 x 105.1 cm. Former Shimazu collection, Japan. Following Yi and Yi (1981, pl. 7).

This unusual iconography of Amitābha is unique to Koryŏ Buddhist paintings, and originally the *Shimazu Amitābha* was conceptualized as a variation of the conventional iconography depicting “Amitābha’s Welcoming Descent” (*naeyŏngdo*, J. *raigōzu* 來迎圖) (Moon 1981a, 243), a representative example of which is an Amitābha triad in the collection of the Ho-Am Art Museum (fig. 3). Here, the Buddha Amitābha, flanked by the two bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Kṣitigarbha, is depicted welcoming or drawing up an aspirant kneeling in supplication into the realm of the Buddha. The “Welcoming Descent” iconography is generally believed to have developed in the Xixia 西夏 regional regime in Central Asia, and early examples from Dunhuang 敦煌, for instance, depict Amitābha and his flanking bodhisattvas floating on clouds. Koryŏ examples, by contrast, tend to show Amitābha standing on lotus petals or lotus blossoms, suggesting that the setting is actually Amitābha’s Pure Land, Sukhāvātī (Pak Tohwa 1988, 68–75; Ide 2003, 36). What was the function of such Koryŏ images if they already depicted Amitābha in the Pure Land?

In the case of Japan, the function of welcoming descent icons (*raigō* 來迎) as representing deliverance into Sukhāvātī and providing comfort for dying aspirants is well documented during the Kamakura 鎌倉 (1185–1333). For instance, a scene in the *Pictorial Biography of Hōnen* (1133–1212) (*Hōnen shōnin eden* 法然上人絵伝) shows him on his deathbed holding a string that is connected to a painting of Amitābha. In the same scene, a vision of Amitābha flanked by two bodhisattvas manifests above Hōnen’s head. That this pictorial epiphany is meant as a welcoming descent may be understood because the Amitābha triad is shown trailed by clouds as if preparing to lead him to the Pure Land. The *Yamagoshi Amida zu* 山越阿彌陀圖, a fourteenth-century screen, provides material evidence that images were used to console dying believers because the painting still preserves the shreds of five-colored strings attached to two of Amitābha’s fingers. A similar type of practice might have existed in Koryŏ because images of Amitābha appear to have been used to comfort the dying believers later in the sixteenth century (Shin 2001, 43–44; 2005).

Art historians are divided on the function of standing images of Amitābha, including Amitābha triads, in the Koryŏ Buddhist context. Such images have conventionally been classified as “welcoming descent icons” (Moon 1981a, 243–245), but Hong Yoon-sik has advanced the theory that all standing



Figure 3. *Amitābha Triad*. Koryŏ, fourteenth century. 110 x 51 cm. Amitābha flanked by Avalokiteśvara (right) and Kṣitigarbha (left). Ho-Am Art Museum, Yongin, Korea. Following Yi and Yi (1981, pl. 18).

Amitābha images should be understood as “icons of the Buddha prophesying of an aspirant’s future Buddhahood” (*sugido*, Ch. *shoujitu* 授記圖), because a painting of the Pure Land possessed by Saifukuji 西福寺 depicts a standing Amitābha triad in both lower corners—and this follows the iconographic program of a Dunhuang painting with the inscription *shoujitu* 授記圖 written above (1984, 157–158). Wai-kam Ho and Young-sook Pak interpret images such as the *Amitābha Triad* in the collection of the Cleveland Museum of Art and *Amitābha Triad* in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum, which share essentially the same iconography of Amitābha and two flanking bodhisattvas turned in a three-quarters stance to the left (from the perspective of the viewer) and standing on lotus flowers, both of which are presumed to date to the fourteenth century, as serving a meditational purpose. For this reason, Pak suggests the tentative categories of “icon for visualization” (*kwansangdo* 觀相圖) or “icon for samādhi” (*sammaedo* 三昧圖) (Ho 1980, 63; Pak Young-sook 1987, 518–521). Nevertheless, Michael Shin takes a more nuanced stance, suggesting that these compositionally rather simple icons of Amitābha could function in diverse devotional practices, including but not limited to such things as deathbed rituals and meditative visualization (Shin 2005). Greater emphasis needs to be placed on the Hwaōm context of these images. The aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land in Koryō did not depend on the Pure Land sūtras, but on an integrated vision of the Pure Land as part of the unobstructed dharma realm.

The *Shimazu Amitābha* typifies this Hwaōm-inspired vision of the Pure Land by functioning as a depiction of rebirth in the Pure Land as the attainment of buddhahood in the dharma realm. The *Shimazu Amitābha* has inscriptions written in gold paint by the monk-painter Chahoe 自回 on both the lower right and lower left corners of the scroll that describe the context of its production. The inscriptions report that in the fifth lunar month of 1286, a retainer named Yōm commissioned the image to supplicate for the everlasting merit and long life (*poksu mugang* 福壽無疆) of the Koryō king Ch’ungnyōl 忠烈 (r. 1308) and his Mongolian queen Changmok 莊穆 (Great Imperial Princess Cheguk 齊國大長公主, 1259–1297), a daughter of Kubhilai Khan. The bulk of the inscription is four lines of seven logographs each extracted from a long gāthā at the end of the *New Translation of the Avatamsaka-sūtra* made during the Zhengyuan Reign Period (*Zhengyuan xinyi huayan jing* 貞元新譯華嚴經

[hereafter Zhengyuan edition]), which refers to the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* in forty rolls (T 293) that was translated into Chinese by the Kashmiri monk Prajñā (Bore 般若) in 798. The Zhengyuan edition was translated by Prajñā, but it is presumed that eminent monks such as Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839) and Yuanzhao 圓照 (fl. 766–804) also participated. The translation was originally titled *Chapter on entering the world system of inconceivable liberation and the practice and vows of Samantabhadra in the Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra* (*Dafang-guangfo huayan jing ru busiyi jietuo jingjie Puxian xingyuan pin* 大方廣佛華嚴經入不思議解脫境界普賢行願品) (hereafter the “Practices” chapter).

Although for the most part the Zhengyuan edition bears many similarities with the two earlier full translations of the sūtra, its distinctive characteristics are that its sentences are even more expanded and lengthened, it appends the ten great vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra, and it merges Hwaōm doctrine with strong accentuation on the cultic practice of seeking rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha. The amalgamation of Hwaōm thought and seeking rebirth in the Pure Land was not developed exclusively by Chinese Hwaōm exegetes, such as Chengguan and Zongmi 宗密 (780–841) in the ninth century; it was also a distinctive characteristic of Korean Buddhism in the middle and late periods of Silla 新羅 (ca. 668–935) from at least the eighth century into the founding of the Koryō (Ide 1997, 90–91; 2003, 36–37; McBride 2008, 86–138). The Zhengyuan edition differs from the other translation of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* because it is only a translation of the “Entry into the Dharma Realm” chapter (*Ru fajie pin* 入法界品), the voluminous final chapter of the sūtra, which circulated separately in India as the *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*.⁶ The lines of the gāthā evoke the aspiration of a suppliant: “I vow that when I reach the end of my life I will completely rid myself of all hindrances; I will gaze upon that Buddha Amitābha and immediately be reborn in the land of peace and bliss (Sukhāvati)” (T 293, 10.848a9–11; Moon 1981a, 244; Ide 2001b, 15 pl. 26).

If we take the “Practices” chapter as our guide to the function of these images, views like those held by the Chinese exegetes Chengguan and Zongmi, whom the Koryō monk Ŭich’ōn considered as his intellectual forebears, were probably pervasive in Koryō. Because of the interpenetration of all things, the original vows of Amitābha reach out to all living beings in the dharma realm;

rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha functions as an expedient means for living beings who are unable to conceptualize the idea that the vow interpenetrates the entire dharma realm; Amitābha's Pure Land of Extreme Bliss (Sukhāvātī) is suffused throughout each and every mote of dust in the Lotus Storehouse Realm, the Hwaōm world system; and so Amitābha is effectively an emanation of the virtues of Vairocana (X 227, 5.198a9–18; X 229, 5.322b17–c12). Zongmi also advocates four kinds of recollection of the Buddha Amitābha: recollection by means of intoning his name (*chengming nian* 稱名念), recollection by means of visualizing images (*guanxiang nian* 觀像念), recollection by means of visualizing his marks (*guanxiang nian* 觀相念), and recollection by means of the marks of reality (*shixiang nian* 實相念) (X 229, 5.280c8–281a1; Kim Yōngjae 2000a, 577). Furthermore, because of the interpenetration of all things, rebirth in the Pure Land is functionally identical to the attainment of buddhahood and involves the perambulations throughout the dharma realm to learn all of the expedients of a bodhisattva, just like Sudhana, the young bodhisattva hero of the last chapter of the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*, “Entry in the Dharma Realm,” of which the “Practices” chapter is an elaboration.

Seen from this context, the iconography of the *Shimazu Amitābha* suggests that Amitābha summons the aspirant to be reborn on a lotus flower pedestal in the Pure Land with his right hand, and then gestures on to the dharma realm of inconceivable interconnections with his left hand (Ide 2003, 37). From this perspective, meditation or visualization is not the operating function of the image, the basic cultic practice of devotion and the vow of an aspirant to be reborn in the Pure Land is sufficient to initiate the seeker's translation into the dharma realm where all beliefs and practices are interconnected.

Of the one hundred or so extant handwritten sūtra manuscripts dating to the Koryō period, thirty-six are related to Hwaōm Buddhism and eight are manuscripts of texts associated with either the *Avataṃsaka-sūtra* in forty rolls or the “Practices” chapter (Ide 1997, 91–92). This provides evidence that the veneration of this sūtra was a relatively substantial aspect of Koryō Buddhist practice. Because this sūtra combines aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha with the bodhisattva path of practice according to the Hwaōm tradition, the cult of Amitābha among the Koryō elite may have derived from the veneration of the “Practices” chapter just as much as from the three Pure Land sūtras (Ide 2003, 38).

Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas

The “Practices” chapter provides the doctrinal motivation for another popular subject of Koryŏ Buddhist painting: “Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas” (*Amit’a p’altae posalto* 阿彌陀八大菩薩圖). Icons of this type typically depict Amitābha surrounded by the bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Ākāśagarbha, Samantabhadra, Vajradhara (Vajrapāṇi), Mañjuśrī, Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin, and Kṣitigarbha.

In the past, the conventionally-accepted source for the iconography of Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas was the putatively “esoteric” *Sūtra on the Maṇḍala of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas* (*Bada pusa mantuluo jing* 八大菩薩曼荼羅經, T 1167; Chung 1990, 140–145), despite the existence of other earlier sūtras on the eight great bodhisattvas that present fundamentally the same information (T 490; T 1168A; Kim Yŏngjae 2000b, 581) or ones that encourage aspirants to invoke them as part of dhāraṇī practice (T 2898). The problem with the *Sūtra on the Maṇḍala of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas* is that it does not describe any relationship between the bodhisattvas and Amitābha. According to the research of Ide Seinosuke, however, among the sixty-two verses of the “Practices” chapter, which comprise the Verses on the Practices and Vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra (*Puxian pusa xingyuan zan* 普賢菩薩行願讚), is an addendum that reproduces a gāthā on the eight great bodhisattvas from the sūtra of the same name (T 297, 10.881b17–c9), thus providing a textual connection between the aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas. This reference is found only in Korean Buddhist materials and provides evidence that the theme of “Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas” is a product of the world of Koryŏ Buddhism. Although no manuscript editions of *Verses on the Practices and Vows of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra* have survived from the Koryŏ period, it was preserved in the Koryŏ Buddhist canon (Lancaster and Park 1979, 426, s.v. K 1282) and two extant manuscripts of the “Practices” chapter include colophons with dhāraṇī extracted from the *Verses*: a manuscript dated 1334 in the Horim Museum and another in the Kyoto National Museum (Ide 2003, 38). These additions to the text of the “Practices” chapter demonstrate that dhāraṇī rituals and procedures were coupled with the cult

of Amitābha and were a significant part of Buddhist devotion in the Koryŏ period. Rebirth in Sukhāvātī was a common goal of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and had been a common aspiration found in dhāraṇī texts popular in Korea since the Silla period (Schopen 1977; McBride 2011, 40–41).

The “Practices” chapter describes at length the Buddha Amitābha surrounded by the aspirants reborn in the Pure Land and by a number of bodhisattvas, including Mañjuśrī, Samantabhadra, Avalokiteśvara, and Maitreya. To these four, the other four bodhisattvas—Ākāśagarbha, Vajrapāṇi, Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin, and Kṣitigarbha, who are mentioned in the various sūtras on the eight great bodhisattvas—were assembled together in a grouping that was probably based on an interpretation of the “Practices” chapter. Taken from this perspective, Ide concludes that the “Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas” genre of paintings is merely another kind of Amitābha painting developed with the Hwaŏm influence of the “Practices” chapter (Ide 2003, 38).

There are two iconographic types of “Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas” paintings: one that depicts the eight bodhisattvas listed previously, and another in which one of the foregoing bodhisattvas—typically Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin—is replaced by Mahāsthāmaprāpta, because of the role of this bodhisattva as an attendant to Amitābha. The bodhisattvas are not always in the same configuration around the central Amitābha, but they are usually identifiable by means of their attributes and objects they hold in their hands.

The *Screen of Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas* by No Yŏng 魯英 in 1307 (fig. 4) in gold ink on black-lacquered wood, which is in the collection of the National Museum of Korea, is an example of the first iconographic style. Part of the inscription has worn away, but the remaining logographs suggest that it was made in conjunction with a vow with other individuals (*tongwŏn* 同願) to obtain (*tŭk* 得) something, presumably rebirth in the Pure Land. The inscription on the connected *Screen of the Bodhisattvas Dharmodgata and Kṣitigarbha on Mt. Kūmgang* lists the names of five individuals with whom No Yŏng made this vow, all of whom appear to be lay people (Moon 1979; Moon 1980; Song Ŭnsŏk 2010, 276).



Figure 4. *Screen of Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas*. Koryŏ, 1307.
By No Yŏng. Gold pigment on black lacquered wood. 21 x 12 cm. National Museum
of Korea. Following Yi and Yi (1981, p. 19).

Transformation Tableaux of the *Visualization Sūtra* and the Hwaōm Pure Land

Another category of Koryō Pure Land paintings attests to the confluence of Hwaōm and Pure Land doctrines and imagery in the pictorial field. A handful of highly-structured and elaborate representations of the sixteen visualizations of the *Visualization Sūtra* are numbered among Koryō Buddhist paintings. Koryō paintings of the Pure Land are narrative portrayals depicting Amitābha in his sumptuously appointed palace complex in Sukhāvātī, which some art historians think are modeled after Koryō architecture (Chōng 2009). Although the category of the sixteen visualizations⁷ seems to have derived from large frescos of the Pure Land of Amitābha found in the Dunhuang caves or the *Taima Maṇḍala Tapestry* (*Taima mandara* 當麻曼荼羅) (Ide 2003, 39), which was woven in Nara 奈良 in about 763, the theme of this genre of painting closely follows the objects an aspirant is encouraged to imagine according to the *Visualization Sūtra* (see fig. 5).

The theme of the sixteen visualizations as depicted in Chinese Buddhist painting is intimately associated with devotional practices advocated by the Tiantai and Vinaya traditions in Song 宋 China (960–1279), such as repentance rituals and chanting Amitābha's name (Ide 2001b, 52–54). In Koryō Buddhism, both of these traditions are linked to the all-pervasive Hwaōm tradition. The Koryō monk Ŭich'ōn was more than just an important proponent of Hwaōm Buddhism. He sought to both preserve and promote all forms of doctrinal or intellectual Buddhism (*kyojong* 教宗) in Koryō. When he studied Buddhism in Song for fourteen months between May 27, 1085 and August 2, 1086, not only did he make friends with monks from many different Buddhist traditions, but he also made a vow at the funerary pagoda and stele of Tiantai Zhiyi 天台智顗 (538–597) that he would spread Tiantai (Kor. Ch'ōnt'ae) Buddhism in Koryō (Ŭich'ōn 1979, 551c14–552c8; McBride 2012, 408–411). Ŭich'ōn lectured on Vinaya and Tiantai materials in Korea (Ŭich'ōn 1979, 559b8–10; 566b11–20), and he also imported many commentaries and curricular texts written by East Asian Buddhist masters, edited them, and published them in his *Canon of Doctrinal Teachings* (*Kyojang* 教藏) in 1090. These included texts by the early Song-dynasty proponent of Tiantai, Siming Zhili



Figure 5. *Transformation Tableau of the Visualization Sūtra*. Koryō, fourteenth century. Hanging scroll, color on silk. 202.8 x 129.8 cm. Saifukuji, Tsuruga-shi, Fukui-ken, Japan. Following Yi and Yi (1981, pl. 4).

四明知禮 (960–1028), who emphasized pious devotion to the sixteen visualizations of the *Sūtra on the Visualization of the Buddha Amitāyus* (*Guan Wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經) in his writings, and the Vinaya advocate Lingzhi Yuanzhao 靈芝元照 (1048–1116), who compiled curricular texts and manuals on Pure Land rituals (T 2184, 55.1170b1–2, 1171c11–12, 1172a13–14).

The disciples of Zhili erected a Hall of the Sixteen Visualizations (Shiliuguantang 十六觀堂) at Yanqing Monastery 延慶寺 in the port city of Ningbo 寧波 in 1099 for the most devoted aspirants seeking to contemplate rebirth in the Pure Land (T 1937, 46.912a18–21). Zhili advocated visualization of the Pure Land as a means of achieving personal enlightenment. Rebirth in the nine grades described by the sūtra were only available to aspirants who emulated the practices of bodhisattvas. On the contrary, Yuanzhao, the Vinaya scholar who created the lineage of the Nanshan Vinaya tradition, emphasized the utility of the *Visualization Sūtra* in lay Buddhist practice. He conceptualized the nine grades of rebirth as a tiered structure: rebirth in the superior class was for bodhisattvas, rebirth in the middle class was for monks and nuns, and rebirth in the inferior class was for lay people. Thus, in effect two interpretations of rebirth in the Pure Land existed side by side: one focused on bodhisattvas and the other embracing ordinary people (Ide 2001b, 52–54; Ide 2003, 39–40).

Both interpretations of the possible candidates for rebirth in the Pure Land via the sixteen visualizations of the *Visualization Sūtra* are exhibited in Koryŏ transformation tableaux (*pyŏnsang* 變相) or narrative portrayals of this sūtra. The *Transformation Tableau of the Visualization Sūtra* from Otakaji 大高寺 presents only bodhisattvas as actors in the portrayal of rebirth among the nine grades of rebirth in the Pure Land, which strongly suggests that the painter or person who commissioned the painting followed the doctrinal position of Tiantai and other archaic elements of imagery based on prototypes from the Northern Song period (960–1127) that resemble examples from the Tang period (618–907). The superior quality of the Otakaji *Transformation Tableau* suggests that it was made for a royal votive shrine, such as Myoryŏnsa 妙蓮寺,⁸ which was refurbished by King Ch'ungnyŏl and his Mongolian queen in 1283. The remaining three versions of this subject portray various types of beings attaining rebirth in the Pure Land, perhaps reflecting Yuanzhao's more open

view of rebirth in the Pure Land. The *Transformation Tableau of the Visualization Sūtra* from Saifukuji 西福寺 (fig. 5) appears to be modeled after Chinese prototypes from the Southern Song period (1127–1279), while the remaining two transformation tableaux from Chionin 知恩院 (fig. 6) and Rinshōji 隣松寺, both dated to 1323, are composed following a formula that appears to be unique to Koryō Buddhist painting (Ide 2003, 40).

The extensive inscription on the *Chionin Transformation Tableau* consists of sixteen rhyming couplets (four lines of seven logographs per line): each individual poem describes one of the sixteen visualizations of the *Visualization Sūtra*. This seems to be an example of a painting intended for the purpose of religious edification as well as devotion. The inscription also preserves an extensive list of donors, including five monks, a noblewoman, two officials, a saṃgha overseer (*sūngt'ong* 僧統) who was the abbot of the otherwise unknown Chōngōp Cloister 淨業院, two painters, and at least twenty-four aspirants, who vow that the merit deriving from the production of this painting be extended to all living beings so that all might be reborn in Sukhāvātī (Song 2010, 272–275; Kim Jung Hee 2012, 262). Moon Myung Dae thinks that the image was commissioned for display at this Chōngōp Cloister, which unfortunately does not appear in extant Koryō records (1981, 233–234). One thing that is intriguing about the poems on the sixteen visualizations is that they mirror the actual teachings of the *Visualization Sūtra* closely and do not emphasize the practice of the recitation of Amitābha's name (*yōmbul*), which is typically understood as the most representative cultic practice believed by aspirants to lead to rebirth in the Pure Land.

Besides narrative portrayals of the *Visualization Sūtra*, Hong Yoon-sik crafted an argument that is in many ways compelling regarding the Koryō provenance of a painting that he classifies as a *Transformation Tableau of the Hwaōm Pure Land* (*Hwaōm chōngt'o pyōnsangdo* 華嚴淨土變相圖) (fig. 7). The foreground of the painting depicts five buddhas—Amitābha, Śākyamuni, Amitābha, Vairocana, and Amitābha—in a paradisiacal setting floating on and amidst clouds, and the background, featuring seven monks and forty-one buddhas following in the entourage of the five buddhas, seemingly portraying the process of the attainment of buddhahood. The five buddhas in the foreground face to the viewer's left in three-quarters stance much like many examples

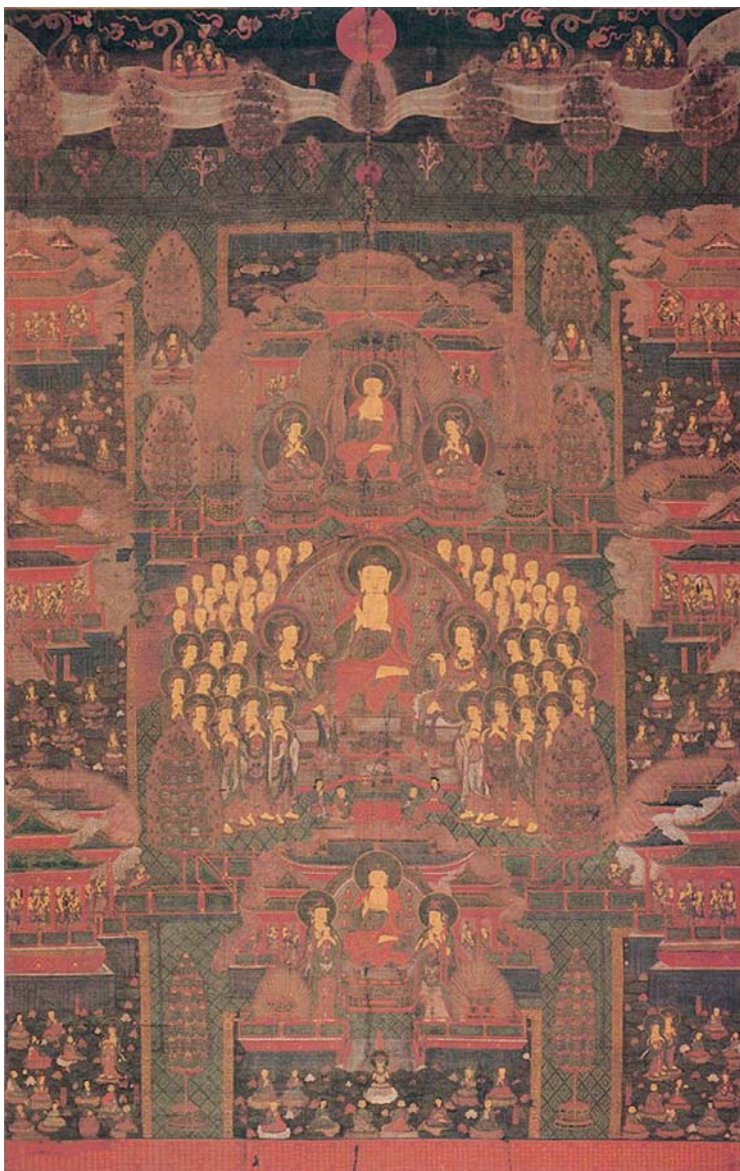


Figure 6. *Transformation Tableau of the Visualization Sūtra*. Koryŏ, 1323. By Sŏl Ch'ung 薛冲 and Yi [?] 李[?]. Hanging scroll; color on silk. 224.2 cm x 139.1 cm. Chionin, Kyoto, Japan. Following http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Goryeo_Buddhist_paintings.

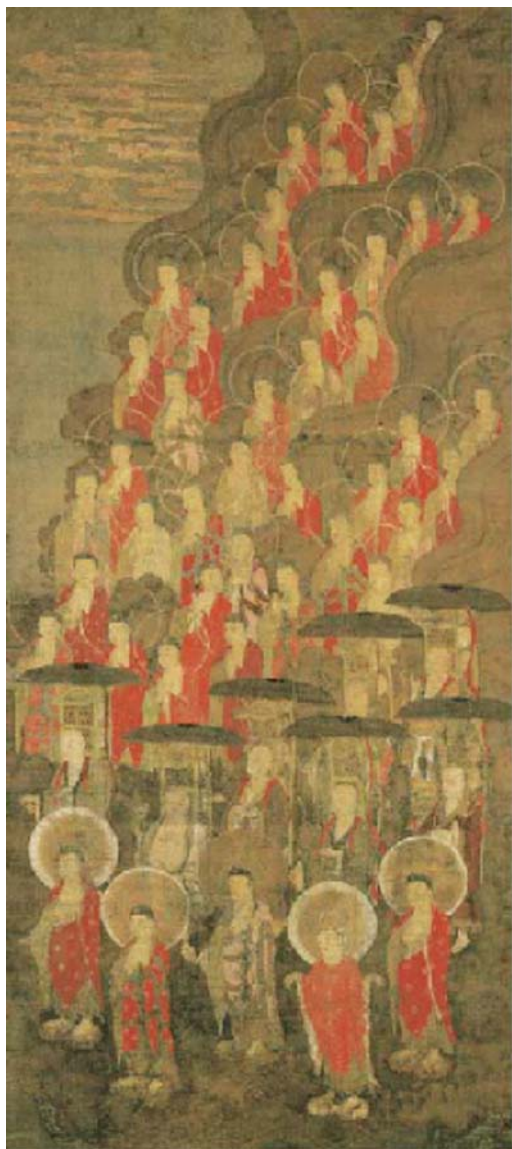


Figure 7. *Transformation Tableau on the Hwaom Pure Land*. Koryŏ, thirteenth century. Anonymous. Hanging scroll; ink, color and gold on silk. 131.1 x 58.5cm. Following http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Visualization_of_the_Hwaom_Pure_Land.png.

of solitary Amitābha paintings and Amitābha triads in a “welcoming descent” pose. The process of attaining buddhahood is characterized by the forty-one buddhas and seven monks bearing parasols, the sum of which, when combined with the five buddhas, is fifty-three figures. Hong equates these fifty-three figures to the fifty-three buddhas of the distant past who are named in the *Sukhāvātīvyūha-sūtra* (*Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經; T 360, 12.266c23–267a13; Hong 1995, 278–284; Hong 1997, 55–64). However, unlike Hong, who seeks a doctrinal justification for the creation of this image in the thirteenth century in the writings of the Sōn Master Pojo Chinul, who combined Sōn practice and Hwaōm doctrine (Hong 1995, 284; 1997, 64), I see its creation well justified by the close association of Hwaōm and Pure Land themes, such as those discussed above regarding the context of the inscription on the *Shimazu Amitābha* and the “Practices” chapter of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, which comes at the conclusion of the “Entry into the Dharma Realm” chapter, or *Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*. In the “Entry into the Dharma Realm” chapter, Sudhana visits fifty-three bodhisattvas in his quest to learn all the expedient means a bodhisattva needs to master. This was a symbolic representation of what would eventually be codified as the fifty-two stages of the bodhisattva path as outlined in the Hwaōm tradition and hints at the interfusion of all of these stages because the first and last of the fifty-three bodhisattvas Sudhana meets are the same bodhisattva: Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom. This transformation tableau functions in the crucial role of translating into an image the Hwaōm doctrine of the interfusion of all things and how aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land is inseparable in an inconceivable way from the aspiration to enlightenment. Thus, aspirants are assured that their devotional impulses and practices are not wasted, but transfer to activities in the dharma realm.

Conclusion

The cult of Amitābha, characterized by veneration of the Buddha Amitābha, recollection and recitation of his name, and the aspiration for rebirth in his Pure Land, Sukhāvātī, was the most widespread form of devotional Buddhism

during the Koryō period. Monks who were proponents of several practice-oriented and doctrinal traditions in Koryō, such as Sōn and Ch'ōnt'ae, encouraged people to seek rebirth in the Pure Land, and taught that seeking rebirth in the Pure Land was appropriate for the current degenerate age of the Buddhadharmā. Evidence of the pervasiveness of Amitābha worship among the elites is found in the large number of Koryō Buddhist paintings treating Amitābha and his Pure Land as the primary subject. Many paintings were probably commissioned for both decorative and devotional use in the numerous votive shrines and temples, where prayers and rituals on behalf of deceased royalty and nobility were conducted for merit in the netherworld. Images of Amitābha in other monastic and government buildings, as well as palace structures, also probably played a role in the abundant Buddhist festivals and ceremonies of the Koryō period. Images of Amitābha and Amitābha triads functioned in a variety of devotional settings and the inscriptions on some icons suggest their use to enable all living beings in the dharma realm to rebirth in the Pure Land. Some images, particularly those that have been classified as “welcoming descent icons” might have been used in deathbed rituals enabling believers to visualize Amitābha coming to escort them into the Pure Land. However, both inscriptional and visual evidence strongly suggest a Hwaōm context for many paintings of Amitābha. Although aspirants, both lay and monastic, sought rebirth in Amitābha's Pure Land, the Hwaōm doctrine of the interpenetration of all things in the dharma realm inferred the ultimate non-duality between Sukhāvātī and the Lotus Storehouse Realm.

Thus, more conspicuously than in contemporary China and Japan, the cult of Amitābha in Koryō was closely associated with Hwaōm Buddhism, particularly the “Practices” chapter, which is at the end of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* in forty rolls. This edition of the *Avatamsaka* elaborates on Sudhana's quest to learn all the practices and vows of bodhisattvas and describes a close connection between veneration of Amitābha and bodhisattva practice in the Hwaōm tradition. Koryō Buddhist paintings of Amitābha, including the genre of Amitābha and the Eight Great Bodhisattvas, are linked to this version of the *Avatamsaka* through verses and dhāraṇīs appended to manuscripts of the text and associated commentaries. The concept of the dharma realm that interpenetrates all things provides context for unique images, such as the *Transformation*

Tableau of the Hwaŏm Pure Land, which both visually and symbolically combine the aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha with the sophisticated but completely interfused Hwaŏm path of bodhisattva practice. Other transformation tableaux of the sixteen visualizations of the *Visualization Sūtra* seem to demonstrate knowledge of varied doctrinal positions that circulated in China on the types of people who are reborn in the nine classes of rebirth in the Pure Land. Such transformation tableaux may have functioned in the context of education and edification, along with devotion, encouraging lay people to become bodhisattvas or reminding them that they could be reborn in the Pure Land.

Notes

I would like to thank my long-time friend and colleague Karen Hwang and the two anonymous reviewers for comments on how to improve this essay. In many instances art historians are sharply divided on interpretive frameworks and the choices of translation for technical jargon. Any errors of content or interpretation that remain are my own.

- 1 What art historians refer to as “Pure Land themes” (*chŏngt’o pulgyo kyeyŏl purhwa* 淨土佛教系列佛畫 and *Amit’a sinang kyeyŏl purhwa* 阿彌陀信仰系列佛畫) include narrative portrayals or “transformation tableaux” of the *Visualization Sūtra* (*Kwan’gyŏng pyŏnsang* 觀經變相) (four examples); paintings of Amitābha (*Amit’a yŏrae kyeyŏl* 阿彌陀如來系列), Amitābha triads (*Amit’a samjon to* 阿彌陀三尊圖), and Amitābha with the eight great bodhisattvas (*Amit’a p’al posal to* 阿彌陀八菩薩圖) (fifty-six examples); paintings of Avalokiteśvara (*Kwanŭm posal kyeyŏl* 觀音菩薩系列), including Water-Moon Avalokiteśvara (*suwŏl Kwanŭm to* 水月觀音圖) (thirty-five examples), the bodhisattva of compassion and attendant to Amitābha; and paintings of Kṣitigarbha (*Chijang posal kyeyŏl* 地藏菩薩系列) (twenty examples), the bodhisattva who descends into hell to ferry living beings to the Pure Land of Amitābha; and even depictions of the Hwaŏm Pure Land (*Hwaŏm chŏngt’o to* 華嚴淨土圖) (one example) (Kim Kyuwŏn 1996, 40).
- 2 I want to use the expression “transformation tableaux,” which is rooted in the Chinese term *bianxiang* 變相 (Kor. *pyŏnsang*), with caution. I use the term in this paper for images that are narrative portrayals of the *Visualization Sūtra*. The term

pyŏnsang appears in illuminated manuscripts (*sagyŏng* 寫經) of the Koryŏ period. If we take a narrow definition of the term to mean an illustration for a “transformation text” (*bianwen* 變文), like those found in Dunhuang caves, perhaps the expression is not appropriate. Although it is not disputed that *bianxiang* and *bianwen* are related, the exact nature of the relationship between the two terms is still under debate (Bai and Mair 1984; Mair 1986; and Wu 2002). If we define *bianxiang* as the transformation of a Buddhist sūtra into a visual representation, I think it is acceptable to call such icons “transformation tableaux” because the term was actually known in the Koryŏ period.

- 3 For instance, in an essay on the Amitābha triad in the Brooklyn Museum, Youngsook Pak classified it as an “icon for visualization” (*kwansangdo* 觀想圖) or an “icon for samādhi” (*sammaedo* 三昧圖), although she admits that it might also have served as a “devotional image” (1987, 521). I understand her as suggesting that the primary purpose was for meditative visualization. Similarly, Junhyoung Michael Shin crafts an argument attempting to show how Koryŏ Buddhist images of Amitābha conformed to the *Visualization Sūtra* as an aid to “imprinting the image on the viewer’s visual memory” (2005, 11).
- 4 Scholars are divided on whether paintings functioned as a principal image of the Buddha (*ponjon*) in monasteries or shrines prior to the late nineteenth century. I would like to thank my colleague Karen Hwang for reminding me of this scholarly debate.
- 5 The dharma body (Skt. *dharmakāya*; Kor. *pŏpsin*, Ch. *fashen* 法身) is the dharma realm (*pŏpkye*, Ch. *fajie* 法界). This refers to seeing the world and the universe as it is as a manifestation of truth, and is equal to such expressions as “true thusness” or “true suchness” (*chinyŏ*, Ch. *zhenru* 眞如).
- 6 There are three primary translations of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* into Buddhist Chinese: the sixty-roll edition translated in the fifth century in the Eastern Jin period (*Jinben* 晉本, T 278), the eighty-roll edition translated at the end of the seventh century during the time of Empress Wu (*Zhouben* 周本, T 279), and the forty-roll edition translated during the Zhengyuan reign (785–805) of the mid-Tang period (*Zhengyuanben* 貞元本, T 293).
- 7 The sixteen visualizations are (1) the setting sun; (2) pure water, ice, lapis lazuli, and the Pure Land; (3) Pure Land in unwavering samādhi; (4) jewel trees of the Pure Land; (5) various waters of the Pure Land; (6) jeweled pavilions of the Pure Land; (7) the lotus throne of the Buddha Amitābha; (8) Amitābha on his lotus throne flanked by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara on his left and the Bodhisattva

Mahāsthāmaprāpta on his right; (9) the physical characteristics of the Buddha Amitābha; (10) the physical characteristics of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara; (11) the physical characteristics of the Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta; (12) oneself being reborn in the Pure Land on a lotus flower; (13) oneself before the Buddha Amitābha flanked by his two attendant bodhisattvas; (14–16) and rebirth of beings of superior, middling, and inferior spiritual capacities each subdivided into three groups (T 365, 12.341c–346b).

- 8 Myoryōnsa was an important votive temple closely affiliated with the Koryō royal family and the Hwaōm and Ch'ōnt'ae traditions during the early period after the Mongol conquest (Han 1998, 133, 172). Located in Samhyōn village in Kaesōng, it was rebuilt as the votive temple for King Ch'unngyōl in 1283.

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- T 279 = *Dafangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 [*Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*, *Flower Garland Sūtra*], 80 rolls. Trans. Śikṣānanda (Shichanantuo 實叉難陀, 652–710) between 695 and 699. T 279, 10.1a–444c.
- T 293 = *Dafangguang fohuayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經 [*Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra*], 40 rolls. Trans. Prajñā (Bore 般若) in 798. T 293, 10.661a–851c.
- T 297 = *Puxian pusa xingyuan zan* 普賢菩薩行願讚 [*Bhadracaryāpraṇidhānārāja*, Verses on the practices and vows of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra], one roll. Trans. Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空, 705–774). T 297, 10.880a2–881c17.
- T 360 = *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 [*Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*, *Larger Pure Land Sūtra*], two rolls. Translated by Saṅghavarman (Kang Sengkai 康僧鎧, d. 280) in 262. T 360, 12.265c–279a.
- T 365 = *Guan Wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 [Sūtra on the visualization of Amitāyus], one roll. T 365, 12.340b–346b.
- T 490 = *Bada pusa jing* 八大菩薩經 [Sūtra on the Eight Great Bodhisattvas], one roll. Trans. Faxian 法顯 (d. after 423). T 490, 14.751b–752a.
- T 1167 = *Bada pusa mantuluo jing* 八大菩薩曼荼羅經 [*Aṣṭamaṇḍalaka-sūtra*, Sūtra on the Maṇḍala of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas], one roll. Trans. Amoghavajra (Bukong 不空, 705–774). T 1167, 20.675a–676a.

- T 1168A = *Dasheng bada pusa mannaluo jing* 大乘八大曼拏羅經 [*Aṣṭamaṇḍalaka-sūtra*], one roll. Trans. Faxian 法顯 (d. after 423). T 1168A, 20.676a–c.
- T 1735 = *Dafangguang huayan jing shu* 大放光華嚴經疏 [Commentary on the Flower Garland Sūtra], 60 rolls. By Chengguan 澄觀 (ca. 738–839) between 784 and 787. T 1735, 35.503a–963a.
- T 1937 = *Siming Zunzhe jiaoxing lu* 四明尊者教行錄 [Record of the teachings and practices of the Reverend Siming (Zhili)], seven rolls. By Zhongxiao 宗曉 (1151–1214). T 1937.46.856a–934a.
- T 2184 = *Sinp'yŏn chejong kyojang ch'ongnok* 新編諸宗教藏總錄 [Catalog of the newly compiled canon of doctrinal teachings of all the schools], three rolls. Comp. Ŭich'ŏn 義天 (1055–1101) in 1090. T 2184, 55.1165b–1178c.
- T 2898 = *Gaowang Guanshiyin jing* 高王觀世音經 [King Gao's Guanshiyin sūtra]. Dunhuang manuscript. T 2898, 85.1425b–1426a.
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- X 229 = *Dafangguang fohuayan jing puxian xingyuan pin biexing shu chao* 大方廣佛華嚴經普賢品行願別行疏鈔 [Extracts of the commentary on the special practices of the practices and vows of the Samantabhadra chapter of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-sūtra*], six rolls. By Zongmi 宗密 (780–841). X 229, 5.220b–329b.
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